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AUTHOR Freshley, Dwight L.
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ABSTRACT

Predicting the outcome of a primary election gives a candidate more exposure to the press, gives him or her a chance to predict modestly and then look better than the prediction, and helps create interest in the election and thereby increase voter turnout. During the 1976 Presidential primaries, most candidates adhered to the classic rule to make modest predictions so that anything more than predicted could be claimed as victory. Thus in some instances more than one candidate was able to claim victory. In the New Hampshire primary, both Jimmy Carter and Morris Udall could claim victory since Carter won the most votes and Udall outpolled all other liberal candidates. Ronald Reagan and Gerald Ford could both claim victory in New Hampshire because Ford received the most votes and Reagan received far more than the 40% he had predicted. Violating the rule can have had results; Henry Jackson, for example, may have hurt his candidacy by predicting a landslide in New York that did not materialize. When predictions fail to become reality, face-saving statements are necessary. Some can extend the damage; some can minimize it. The successful candidates made the most positive use of their instances of overpredicting. (TJ)

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MANIPULATING PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS:

PRE- AND POSTPRIMARY STATEMENTS IN THE '76 CAMPAIGN

Dwight L. Freshley

University of Georgia

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With the increasing importance of primaries in determining the nomination of the party candidates, aspiring candidates had many opportunities in 1976 not only to present themselves and their programs to the people and the press, but in thirty primaries to create anticipation and excitement for the electorate by predicting the outcome of each primary.

How the candidates chose rhetorical strategies to predict the outcomes and interpret the results of primaries is the concern of this paper. But first we must ask what functions are served by the candidates' statements before and after primary elections.

Candidates seize on pre- and postprimary election times to perform several functions. Before a primary election, predicting the outcome 1) gives the candidate more exposure to the press, 2) gives him a chance to predict modestly and then to look better than his prediction, and 3) helps to fulfill the instrumental purpose of campaigning by creating more interest in the election so as to increase voter turn-out. This can be a learning experience for the electorate. For as Robert Hutchins says in The Learning Society, "When we speak of the consent of the governed, we mean, since men are not angels, who seek the truth intuitively and do not have to learn it, that every act of assent on the part of the governed is a product of learning."[1] Postprimary comments by the candidate 1) complements the consummatory function of campaigning by getting the voters involved so they not only want to know the outcome of a primary but await the reaction of the candidate to "winning" or "losing," and 2) provides added coverage with an opportunity for the candidate to appear as the surprised and/or elated winner, the justified frontrunner, or the gracious loser with well documented reasons for the loss.

Our analysis will consider the categories of the classic rule of modest prediction being followed, the rule being violated with bad and good results, and postprimary face-saving. The analysis will illustrate three rhetorical-political "laws" which candidates follow in primaries.

The first law, the most sacred rule of political prognostication for the enhancement of the candidate's prospects of winning, is to play down his chances[2] so that if the candidate gets more than predicted, he can claim victory.

A second "law" growing out of the analysis of the 1976 election might be labeled the 40% law. It says that the underdog candidate will be seen a "winner" if he predicts and captures over 40% of the vote in a two-man race. If this kind of winning is repeated too often and is not offset by actual primary victory, the candidate will soon be tagged as an "also-ran."

A third general law embraces postprimary wisdom which predicts one of four positions a candidate will probably take, and these will be on a continuum of most to least desirable. 1) Winning is best; rhetorical choices abound for the graciously confident victor. 2) The next best thing to winning is to make it look as if the winner fell short of his goal. 3) Next, the candidate will confirm his preprimary prediction of the successful challenge and stress the significance of second place, "the viable candidate" image. 4) Finally, if

back in the pack, he must provide a credible explanation of "losing;" we shall call this the "it rained hard in Hartford" syndrome.

The rationale for these laws resides in cultural mores and voter perception. In a culture that rewards and reveres the victor, winning is the perpetual Holy Grail. Vince Lombardi's credo "winning isn't everything, it's the only thing," has outdistanced Grantland Rice's earlier injunction that it is not winning or losing, but how you play the game that counts.[3] Early in school children are nurtured with the win syndrome as they are urged to finish problems at the board with the first student who sits down declared the winner. This pattern of behavior contrasts sharply with that of Navajo Indian children who are taught to wait until the last child at the board is finished before sitting down. Where success is such a premium it follows that rhetorical choices open to participants of any contest will show the contestant in the best possible light on a scale from the exulting in victory to creating highly imaginative excuses if defeated soundly. Voter perception is the second part of the rationale behind the most to least desirable rhetorical responses to campaign election results. In an age of the medium is the message, the expectations of the electorate influence the candidates' responses. As Martin Schram observes, "to be a winner, a candidate must not only perform as well as he can, but he must perform as people expect him to, as well."[4]

We are ready, then to consider how the underdogs, incumbents, and campaign veterans dealt with preprimary predictions and postprimary interpretations.

PREDICTING PRIMARY OUTCOMES

The Classic Rules Upheld

The majority of contenders for the 1976 nominations went by the political rule book playing down their chances so that if they got more than predicted they could claim some kind of victory. We shall look at several candidates in New Hampshire, three other Carter primaries and three Reagan primaries for illustrations.

New Hampshire figured heavily in the campaign communication strategies of most candidates. It was to continue to be a microcosm of U.S. elections with multiple attractive features, chief of which was being first. McGovern's fast start there in 1972 made camps of unknowns like Carter and Harris aware of how important a good showing here would enhance their chances.

New York Times reporter Douglas Kneeland very early caught on to the game Carter and Udall strategist were playing. "Backers of Mr. Carter and Mr. Udall," he said, "have been doing an Alphonse and Gaston act for weeks, each insisting that the other should be considered the front runner."[5] Jim Merriner of the Atlanta Constitution in his post-election analysis relates that the "Carter campaign subtly put out the word that Rep. Morris Udall of Arizona, not Carter, had the best organized campaign in New Hampshire and should be expected to win."[6] Publicly, however, Carter did profess not to understand Udall's reasoning, likening the race to one of "best of show" rather than "best of breed." "My goal is not to come in second anywhere--even here. I don't understand Udall's strategy."[7] This was more consistent with what he had been telling New Hampshire audiences about his long range predictions. Typical of his campaign claims, that bespoke an exuberant confidence for one who was still unknown to 46% of the electorate one week before

the primary there, was his insistence to audiences in early January that I'll be in Madison Square Garden when the last vote is counted and the nominees will be chosen on the first ballot. The Democratic nominee will be president. And with your help, the next president will be a nuclear engineer that grows peanuts in Georgia."[8] After his dramatic win (Carter 30%; Udall 23%; Bayh 15%; Harris 11%), Carter was gracious but candid: "We are hoping to come in first or second. I thought we would for the last month or two. This is a good indication that in New England I can do well . . . . [This win] should put aside once and for all the idea that a Southerner cannot be elected president."[9]

The Udall camp classically hedged their political fortunes in the nation's first primary when its former pro basketball player turned U.S. representative averred, "It would not be fatal for me to come in behind Carter here. I'd be happy to beat Bayh." He went on to play the Carter strategists' game by suggesting "it's entirely possible that Carter would finish ahead of the pack."[10] After his loss by seven per cent to Carter, he maintained that his showing illustrated a significant gain since the Iowa caucuses and enabled him to achieve recognition which was what he was after. The strategy in the early primaries was to establish leadership of the liberal candidates in the race. Having beaten Bayh, Harris, and Shriver, he achieved this first step.

Both Bayh and Harris had predicted third place finishes.[11] Sargent Shriver provided some early campaign humor as he declared "anybody that finishes fifth behind me ought to slash their wrists." Shriver did finish fifth but there was no report of attempted suicide in his camp. Fred Harris had even more reason to lament his fourth place showing in a state in which he had campaigned twenty days over the year. But he rationalized with levity: "Our problem is that the little people were not able to reach the levers on the voting machines--a stool in every voting place is one of our promises." Turning serious, he continued, "We've not done as well here as we would have liked to have done--that's from the actual voting. We've done better than we might have thought in that we got the other candidates to adopt the issues that we think are important."[12]

Unlike the fifteen hopefuls breaking out of the Democratic starting gate, the Republicans began as they ended, with a two man race. Incumbent Ford's advisers early on had forecast a smashing victory over former California governor Ronald Reagan, but the week before the election, they were guessing that the President would come through with a slim margin, with some saying privately that, "it's too close to call."[13] A month before, in a Time interview Ford was cautiously confident" "I don't expect to lose, and I am going to be there until the last ballot is counted. I like a good fight, and it will be a good one. I don't have any fear or apprehension. I sleep very well."[14] Even with the razor-thin edge (49% to 48%), Ford exclaimed that his victory was "a great springboard" to the Republican nomination and to victory in the November presidential election.[15] Then he tempered his prediction on the nomination race: "If we win a couple more, and I think we will, we'll be ready for the finals, and I think we'll win there too."[16]

Reagan campaign aides were saying cautiously the week before New Hampshire that their man would "do well" with something more than 40%.[17] They were divided on exactly how well he would have to do to make an impact. Some contended he would remain a viable candidate if he came within five percentage points of Ford's total. Others said their candidate had to score a clear-cut victory over Ford in this first primary if he was to remain a credible challenger.[18] The 48% showing by Reagan was bold vindication of their classic strategy of modest prediction. "We came here believing if we could achieve 40% of the vote that this would be a token of viable candidacy and we could go

on. . . . If it continues the way it is, we, of course have exceeded our expectations."[19] Of course, what Mr. Reagan is saying is that he hopes he has also raised the expectations of the electorate for the ensuing primaries, that they have learned something from his campaigning and will vote for him next time.

This important first primary, then, on which so much attention had been lavished, demonstrated in the main the conventional political rule of playing down one's chances hoping to claim some kind of victory if doing better than the prediction. In fact, the prediction of and satisfaction with less than first place winning became a repeated target of the opposition and press corps. Ford Campaign manager Rogers Morton said on the TV "Today Show" the day after the New Hampshire primary: "I heard the Democratic candidates [Udall and Bayh] say they achieved all their goals when they ran second and third. This is a new politics. I've always felt it was better to win." Later, before the Pennsylvania primary in April, Carter was to quip, "Mo [Rep. Udall] has made second sound so good that I hate to talk about being first."[20]

Later Carter primaries in Illinois, Pennsylvania, and Ohio added support to orthodox predicting. Even after Carter's Florida victory (March 9), the former Georgia governor would not predict that his victory there would sweep him through Illinois the next week (March 16): "We found out following Massachusetts [where he finished fourth] that a victory in one state does not necessarily carry over to another one."[21] After his impressive win (Carter 48%; Wallace 28%; Shriver 16%; Harris 8%), Carter said through his press secretary Jody Powell that he had not expected to win by such a wide margin in his first test in a northern industrial state.[22] This modesty seemed calculated to allay some fears of sounding overconfident at times. Two primaries later in Pennsylvania (April 27) he softened his opening volley of assuredness, "I really believe I can win it all there," by saying, "but I can't really lose it, because we're in every primary and I'll have a good chance to win in Texas [May 1] and in Indiana the next week."[23] Pennsylvania was the primary in which Jackson was supposed to have the labor vote locked up and be able to keep the door open for Hubert Humphrey.

Scoring the most important victory yet in the campaign (Carter 37%; Jackson 25%; Udall 19%; Wallace 11%), he deftly set the scene for his supporters and reporters who just happened to be covering the celebration: "We've just completed the first phase of the presidential primaries of 1976 by wiping out every possible obstacle." And the winning slogans were not omitted. "I think we're going to win, win on the first ballot. We're No. 1 and we're going to stay No. 1."[24] He went on to say at a morning news conference after the win, "It would be unlikely that I could be stopped now unless I made a mistake, and the biggest mistake would be to become arrogant." In explaining his win in this key northern industrial state, he said on the "Today" show "We showed . . . that we could meet any sort of machine political organization challenge and do it successfully. I think this will be the last gasp of any sort of organized stop-Jimmy Carter movement."[25]

Having said he could not really lose, the smashing victory was to be savored, his detractors to be gently put down, his potential obstacle--his own possible arrogance--to be recognized in a display of intellectual honesty. Perhaps this last attempt at candor was to counteract what commentators had long since noted. As Roger Mudd put it in his February 25, 1976, CBS News report, "Jimmy Carter probably talks with more intense confidence than any

person who ever ran for the Presidency." In the next week, Carter was the winner in five of six states (the sixth state being opponent George Wallace's Alabama), picking up another 212 delegates.

A final example of Carter's profitable preprimary hedging came in his June 8 Ohio campaign. Although Carter was optimistic about Ohio, he was cautious about how big his win would be. Perhaps thinking of that large block of uncommitted delegates in New Jersey, he told Ohioans, "What happens here will have a profound effect on the uncommitted delegates." Here were hopes that the bandwagon would continue its inevitable route to victory. When his Ohio campaign manager predicted that Carter would win two thirds of the state's delegates, Carter dismissed the prediction as "naive" and "a mistake."[26] His campaign manager was right: Carter took 126 of the 152 or 82% of the delegates while capturing 52% of the popular vote. Udall received twenty delegates and 21% of the vote.

We conclude this section showing how candidates claim less and hope for more by describing three other Reagan primaries. A month before the Florida March 9 primary, Reagan campaign workers were predicting a 2-to-1 victory over Ford. A week before, the tune was changed, and they were saying he would continue campaigning if he polled over 40%. The candidate himself on March 4 in Orlando told reporters he would settle for a loss if Ford's margin was not too big.[27] This was a classic kind of hedging since among the early contests Reagan was thought to have the best shot at Ford in Florida.

He carried through in his post-primary reactions, putting the best possible light on his 53% to 47% loss. "We're all delighted." He went on to explain that what it meant was that President Ford "has shot all the big artillery there is, used everything in the incumbency that he can--and we're still possessing almost half the Republican votes."27 He repeated that he never expected to win in Florida although his state campaign manager L. E. (Tommy) Thomas had been predicting a 55-45 Reagan victory right up to election day.[29]

Just as Reagan did not expect to win in Florida, neither did he ever expect to win in Illinois the following week. "I have always thought that Illinois was where he (Ford) had a better opportunity than any place," he said even though he was born in that state.[30] Still he clung to his favorite 40% base and said he would be happy with that percentage. He managed that by a hair's breadth (Ford 59%, Reagan 40%, Daly 1%). He was less successful in predicting delegate wins, saying he would win 20 of 96. He won 11. After the primary he issued a statement from his Pacific Palisade's, California home, repeating his preprimary-objective: "We appear to have met our goal of over 40% of the vote." He went on:

> The fact that I have won over 40% of this organization-dominated state once again indicates that there is a major dissatisfaction within our party with the kind of leadership it has been receiving.
>
> Again I wish to assure my supporters that we are winning in the convention states, and the South and West look favorable.
>
> As long as this outlook remains unchanged, I am confident we will go to the national convention in August with at least a 50-50 chance of winning the nomination.[31]

After a fourth straight defeat Reagan still attempted to manipulate the results to his best possible advantage for the future. He did drop the standard line of most candidates that he would win the party presidential nomination. Even before his Illinois defeat he maintained the reason to continue running was to force the President to make policy decisions that hewed to the conservative line.[32]

For the March 23 North Carolina primary, Reagan said again he would be satisfied with a second place finish but he foresaw a close race and said, "I think we've got more of a fighting chance there for a win than we've had . . . so far."[33] Fighting he had to do since the combination of defeats and a campaign organization that was heavily in debt were taking their toll. Pressure to withdraw from the race continued during the primary. But the Reagan doomdayers would have to wait, for his campaign gained new life from the 52% to 46% margin over Ford. Roger Mudd of CBS News portrayed the drama on March 24: "Twenty four hours ago, nobody would have predicted a Reagan victory. . . . People have forgotten about the nature of the Republican party--that they are anti-Red and anti-red tape." Reagan re-echoed his "I'm delighted, we're all delighted," reaction and added, "It indicates the issues we've been talking about are catching on."[34]

The classic rule in these cases, then, was upheld. Candidates hedged their chances enough so that when they did better than expected they were perceived as "winning." As expected,the strategy was used by the acknowledged underdogs more than the favorites or incumbent. Comparative unknowns Carter and Udall staged the model battle in New Hampshire as each tried to claim the other as having the lead or having the best organization. Udall had the built in hedge of just wanting to lead the liberal contingent. Carter had the problem of talking confidently if not audaciously on the stump and having that square with more modest staff predictions. This was just the opposite of Reagan's problem in Florida. Incumbent Ford's predictions went from "smashing victory" to "slim margin" in one month and he soon learned that his was not a typical advantage of the incumbent, and that, indeed, his not having been elected in his own right was probably a factor. But he still got caught violating the classic rule as we shall see in the next section.

The Classic Rule Violated: Bad and Good Results

Classic rule or no classic rule, some candidates look at the national polls and their own polls, or hear the thunderous applause after their campaign pitch, and convince themselves a sure-fire victory awaits them next Tuesday. When it does happen, verbal scrambling attempts to salvage what is left or explain away the unexpected result. In at least seven primaries billowy, overblown prediction balloons were punctured at the polls. We shall look at four with bad results--predicted wins that turned into losses--and two with good results, wins that turned into losses--and two with good results, wins that far exceeded expectations.

The New Hampshire win turned the Carter camp giddy, and they promptly forgot the maxim of modest prediction and tried to "put it away" in Massachusetts predicting victory there the next week. Carter ran a poor fourth behind Jackson, Udall, and Wallace. His opening explanation for the less than impressive showing sounded the "it rained hard in Hartford" theme. "A lot of mud was thrown in Massachusetts, but it was the snow that hurt us," he submitted, and added two other reasons. Two, he believed his New Hampshire victory the week before would influence Massachusetts voters more than it did. Three, he felt he underestimated

the busing issue that made the strong finishes of Jackson and Wallace possible.[35] Carter was a political realist and tried to deal with his first setback head-on, admitting he thought the dramatic win in New Hampshire would help carry him and then, getting double duty from the mud-snow line, suggesting there was some smearing while emphasizing the bad weather. He may have been genuinely puzzled by the busing issue since he felt he dealt squarely with it in his speeches. In answers to questions, he would explain how successful the Atlanta plan was implemented when he was governor of Georgia. But he failed to assess how deeply the split was in the Boston community, and how his oft-repeated line, "The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was the best thing that happened to the South in my lifetime," may have been counter-productive for this primary. The peanut farmer turned politician hit his personal low point of the campaign with this loss.[36]

Of course Jackson saw it differently. He credited his win to his stand on economic issues. "The overriding issue was the lunch pail," he said. "I identified with them in terms of employment and what I had done in the field of energy as it relates to oil prices." He added, "Labor did a fantastic job for me."[37] It was the same, ebullient Henry Jackson in the same news conference that "pulled a Jimmy Carter," getting carried away with his first victory. He acknowledged that his contest with Carter and Wallace the next week in Florida was "going to be rough, but Massachusetts is the key. To get the Democratic nomination one must carry the industrial states. We're going to win New York April 6 . . . . It could even be a landslide; that's the meaning of Massachusetts."[38]

Again, euphoria breeds overstatement. Rhetorical choices return to haunt bold candidates. The landslide did not materialize. In fact, Jackson managed only 37% of the vote (Udall 27%; Carter 12%; Uncommitted 24%). And this was in a Byzantine style primary in which many of Carter and Udall's delegates were stricken from ballots in numerous districts on tiny technicalities. Jackson, who was the best known of the Democratic candidates, was not helped by having to eat his words in the middle of the primaries--and with the even more crucial industrial state, Pennsylvania, coming up in three weeks.

By North Carolina primary time (March 23), President Ford felt his nomination express train was speeding along and nothing could stop it. At a Charlottee airport press conference, he said, "I think we have the momentum on our own, and I have no apprehension that it will be stopped. I don't really care [whether Reagan gets out] because our campaign is predicated on going on to Kansas City and getting the nomination."[39] Indifference to the imminent political corpse would rise up to haunt Ford as Reagan scored his first victory over incumbent Ford 52% to 46%. But Ford didn't have to retreat as much as his staff who had said before the primary that their victory could apply the <u>coup de grace</u> to Reagan's faltering bid for the nomination. They quickly shifted ground afterwards maintaining that Ford was actually strengthened by meeting Reagan in the state primaries since they proved he could win in such diverse states as New Hampshire, Illinois, and Florida, and that his image of a stumblebum was forgotten. In contrast to Carter's attempted explanation of his Massachusetts loss, the Ford staff simply accentuated the positive and ignored the negative.

The May 1 Texas primary found Ford acknowledging, "I'm the underdog. But underdogs sometimes win. The lead [Reagan's] will be narrow"[40] Granted the complicated primary system in Texas, the 96-0 sweep of delegates by Reagan belied the prediction of a narrowing lead. Still, Ford flew into Fort Wayne the next day stressing the good side and explaining away the loss: "We lost, but I don't think it will have any serious effect on our winning in Kansas City and winning in November." He said he was "naturally disappointed,"

but went on to explain that "the main problem was a great many crossovers from people who ordinarily vote the Democratic primary and some apathy on the part of some Republicans."[41]

It is difficult to assess what affect, if any, the boomeranging predictions had on candidates chances. The New York "landslide" projection by Jackson seemed to be the most serious and followed him through pivotal Pennsylvania. Carter and Ford's miscues were forgotten in follow-up victories.

Not all violations of the classic rule of the modes prediction bred ill results. Two examples from the Carter campaign illustrates how a candidate exhibits great confidence and is more than vindicated by the ballot box. Three and a half months before the Florida primary, Carter told a cheering crowd of over 800 at a $100 a plate dinner, "I've been very cautious about making a prediction about Florida," Then he went on to exclaim, "In Florida I'm going to beat George Wallace!"[42] One day before the primary at a free fish fry in a Tampa park, Carter intoned, "I don't intend to lose. I intend to be the next president. There's no way to stop me."[43]

Hamilton Jordan, Carter's campaign manager put even more pressure on the Florida campaign result when he was quoted on CBS Evening News by Walter Cronkite on March 8 as saying "Florida is make or break. If he [Carter] doesn't do well in Florida, he doesn't deserve to win." He won over eleven other candidates. The top three: Carter 35%; Wallace 31%; Jackson 24%. Carter called his win "a major step forward for us" and attributed the victory to more than a year of intensive campaigning (thirty-five trips to Florida himself) and a strong organization. Asked if he was now the indisputable Democratic front runner, Carter said, "I don't see anybody else who is ahead of me, but we still have a long way to go."[44]

Carter expected to win in North Carolina. He dropped his standard "I'm going to win" spiel because he did not think he needed "to say it so much here." He knew his audience well, for those North Carolina Democrats were the first on the primary trail to give Carter an absolute majority (Carter 54%; Wallace 35%; Jackson 4%). That vote signaled the effective end of the Wallace candidacy. Only four years before, Wallace had captured over 50% of the votes in his win over former North Carolina Governor Terry Sanford. In St. Louis the day after, Carter said of his win, "I think it's another indication the people are going to make the choice this year and won't let the political big-shots get involved in horsetrading."[45]

Neither party was immune from the political fever infection of overconfident predictions. Democratic hopefuls Carter and Jackson succumbed at least once. The Georgian recovered from Massachusetts to run again and again. Senator Jackson's miscalculation in New York drove another nail in his political coffin. Republican incumbent Ford twice got carried away with his positive thinking, in North Carolina and Texas, the first losing when he predicted a win and the second predicting a narrow loss and suffering a complete delegate sweep by Reagan. There were appropriate face-saving "it rained hard in Hartford" rhetorical responses from the snow and charges of mudslinging in Massachusetts to the many cross-over votes in Texas. Finally, Carter's campaign illustrated in two instances how the candidate "called his shots." The bold call in the pivotal Florida contest could have been fatal but when rhetorical choices are grounded on a sound data base from the precinct up, the risk of the errant prediction are minimized. That win hoisted the confidence banner into the North Carolina ring where he delivered the knock-out punch to the candidacy of George Wallace.

Postprimary Face Saving

Besides the classic hedging and the unclassic prediction of outright victory, there were some post-primary explanations which did not fit into either category and which we have labeled face saving. Vivid examples of this kind of manipulation of primary results came from Wallace in Illinois, Harris in Oklahoma, Udall in Wisconsin, and Carter and Ford in Nebraska.

A sinking candidate will grab any life-preserving statement. Campaigning in Illinois after his defeat in Florida, George Wallace used the argument that McGovern had won fewer delegates than he had at the same time in the 1972 campaign: "You remember I won the primary in Florida with 42% in 1972 and George McGovern got 3% of the vote but went on to win the nomination."[47]

Nebraska slowed down both the Carter and Ford campaigns. With Carter it was latecomer Frank Church knocking "a few spokes from the wheels of the Carter bandwagon."[48] Carter's response to this 39%-38% loss to Church was to play down its importance ("I can't win 'em all") and to direct the attention to the next weeks more important primaries in Maryland and Michigan. The "can't win 'em all" retort was his favorite in the losses he did suffer, and was an easy rationalization since he was running in every primary.

Ford had a similar answer when he lost to Reagan 55% to 45% in Nebraska. Bob Schieffer of CBS radio reported that "he tried to put his best face possible on the Nebraska primary loss of the night before. He explained he had always expected to lose some of the primaries and that he expected some disappointments in the month of May."[49]

The reality of the primary results, then, bore down heavily on the candidates of both parties. When it did not seem advantageous to hedge beforehand or to spin a web of reasons for defeat afterwards, there was simple candor. In the categories we have discussed a majority of the candidates followed the traditional rule of predicting less and hoping for more. In the more specific application of the "law" the Reagan forces used a 40% base as their goal in that two-man race and were successful in fourteen primaries in winning 40% or more of the vote. In five of six primaries, Reagan saw himself as "winner," having come within 5% of the projected winner.[50]

Violating conventional political wisdom by overconfident predictions burned several of the major candidates. Political novice Jimmy Carter learned his lesson in Massachusetts, Ford stumbled in North Carolina and Texas, Wallace was desperately confident in Florida, but perhaps the most damage was done to Senator Henry Jackson in New York and the aftermath in Pennsylvania. The good results, in contrast, from prediction violations in the Carter campaign in Florida and North Carolina came from hard data or polls and knowledge of excellent campaign organization and in the case of Florida, intense campaigning.

Finally, most candidates indulged in some face-saving at one time or another. The examples cited confirmed that people, including political candidates, will try to drown their cognitive dissonance in a sea of excuses.

The drama of prediction, then, was played out in the primaries. Each state contest was an act leading up to the climactic last act featuring the general election. Candidates stimulated voter interest not only in campaigning but, in assessing their chances to win, helped to reinforce, activate and convert voters which is a most important behavioral activation in a popular democracy.

[1]Robert M. Hutchins, The Learning Society (New York: Frederick A. Praeger), The Atlanta Constitution, November 4, 1976, p. 4-5.

[2]Jim Merriner, "The Campaign Trail: The Primaries," The Atlanta Constitution, November 4, 1976, p. 4-5. Merriner maintains Carter strategists learned this lesson from Timothy Crouse's The Boys on the Bus (New York: Random House, 1973).

[3]The original Grantland Rice stanza reads:
For when the One Great Scorer comes
To write against your name,
He marks--not that you won or lost--
But how you played the game.

[4]Running for President (New York: Pocket Books, 1976), p. 20.

[5]New York Times, 22 February 1977, p. 1.

[6]"The Campaign Trail: The Primaries," The Atlanta Constitution, 4 November 1977, p. 1

[7]Atlanta Constitution, 22 February 1976, p. 16A.

[8]Speech, Portsmouth, New Hampshire, 7 January 1976, Tape recording.

[9]Athens Banner Herald, 25 February 1976, p. 1.

[10]Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 22 February 1976, p. 16A.

[11]After the Iowa caucus in January where he finished third, Harris said, "The winnowing process has begun and we've been winnowed in."

[12]From an unpublished report, "Fred Harris," by Pat Devlin, of the University of Rhode Island. Devlin observed Harris on about twenty occasions from June, 1975 through March, 1976.

[13]Douglas Kneeland, New York Times, 22 February 1976, p. 1.

[14]Time, 26 January 1976, p. 12

[15]Athens Banner Herald, 25 February 1976, p. 1.

[16]James M. Naughton, New York Times, 26 February 1976, p. 19.

[17]Kneeland, New York Times, 22 February 1976, p. 1.

[18]Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 22 February 1976, p. 16A.

[19]Kneeland, New York Times, 25 February 1976, p. 44.

[20]Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 25 April 1976, p. 10A.

[21]Atlanta Constitution, 17 March 1976, p. 12A.

[22]Atlanta Constitution, 17 March 1976, p. 12A.

[23] Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 25 March 1976, p. 1A.

[24] St. Louis Post Dispatch, 28 April 1976, p. 8.

[25] Athens Banner Herald, 28 April 1976, p. 11.

[26] Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 6 June 1976, p. 25A.

[27] Cleveland Plain Dealer, 5 March 1976, p. 1.

[28] Richard Bergholz, Los Angeles Times, 10 March 1976, p. 14.

[29] The observation by the state campaign manager Tommy Thomas suggests that perhaps Florida is a tainted example for the "claim less, hope for more" school. If elections are a matter of voter perception, they are also a matter of candidate staff perception. In this primary, three different forecasts came out of the Reagan organization at different times. Timing can account for some of the disparity among the expected results. In this case, the earlier prediction was certainly the most optimistic. Secondly, the role in the campaign seems to affect the prediction. A state campaign manager has to maintain a positive posture to keep up the morale of his staff and try to effect a bandwagon in that state. The candidate himself stands apart and because he should be able to see the "whole picture" he will tend to hedge more than his staff.

[30] Richard Bergholz, Los Angeles Times, 10 March 1977, p. 14.

[31] Los Angeles Times, 17 March 1976, p. 16.

[32] Cleveland Plain Dealer, 11 March 1976, p.

[33] Richard Bergholz, Los Angeles Times, 10 March 1976, p. 14.

[34] CBS News, 24 March 1976.

[35] Hal Gulliver, Atlanta Constitution, 8 March 1976, p. 4A.

[36] Merriner, p. 4S.

[37] Robert Shogan, Los Angeles Times, 3 March 1976, p. 18.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Claudia Townsend, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 21 March 1976, p. 1A.

[40] Jon Ford, Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 25 April 1976, p. 1A.

[41] Don Irwin, Los Angeles Times, 3 May 1976, p. 14.

[42] Athens Banner Herald, 11 November, 1975, p. 1.

[43] David Schultz, Atlanta Constitution, 8 March 1976, p. 10A.

[44] Atlanta Constitution, 10 March 1976, p. 7A.

[45]Atlanta Constitution, 24 March 1976, p. 1A.

[46]Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 3 March 1976, p. 12A.

[47]Devlin, p. 12.

[48]Time, 24 May 1976, p. 10.

[49]Bob Schieffer, "First Line Report," CBS Radio 12 May 1976. The candidate's response was considerably more appropriate than that of his campaign chairman, Rogers Morton, who said on TV as he watched the grim results come in from Nebraska: "I'm not going to rearrange the furniture on the deck of the Titanic." Time, 24 May 1976, p. 8.

[50]The six states in which Reagan came within 5% of Ford's total were: (Reagan's percentage first) New Hampshire, 48%-49%; Indiana, 51%-49%; Kentucky, 47%-51%; Oregon, 49%-50%; Tennessee, 49%-50%.